

# **RAVEN ROCK STATE PARK PARK PROFILE**

## **PARK PURPOSE STATEMENT**

Raven Rock, a bluff that juts out at a sharp angle along the Cape Fear River, has been a landmark to river travelers since before the Civil War. As land transportation improved, it became a popular regional destination for picnickers visiting the scenic river vistas and unusual bluffs. Local support for establishing a state park culminated in 1969 when the General Assembly authorized funding for Raven Rock State Park and thus preserved the site's natural and scenic quality from a potential mining operation.

The park's significant geological resources occur primarily along the Cape Fear River, the dominant surface water feature. The park's unique bluffs are representative of its location in the fall zone separating the Piedmont region's more resistant rocks from the sediments and softer rocks of the Coastal Plain. The numerous metamorphic rock faces, which are about 450 millions years old, have been sculpted and eroded by the river. Raven Rock, the bluff for which the park is named, is exceptionally tall for the Piedmont, with an elevation of over 100 feet above the Cape Fear River. It is the highest bluff in the North Carolina fall zone and is located on the eastern edge of the slate belt. Rapids, a typical river feature in the fall zone, occur at Fish Traps and Lanier Falls.

The significant biological resources include three registered natural areas: Raven Rock State Park Natural Area, Avents Creek-Cape Fear River Floodplain Natural Area and Granitic Flatrock Natural Area. The park's plant communities include maturing, successional communities representative of the eastern Piedmont as well as a number of unusual natural communities derived from the combination of unique habitats and the interface of the Piedmont and Coastal Plain at the fall zone. Unusual habitats include the bluffs, flatrocks and north-facing mesic areas with disjunct montane species. Pines and oak-hickory forest dominate the ridge tops, while mature beech and mixed hardwoods cover the slopes and floodplain. Remnant longleaf pine trees and their associates are evidence of past forest types. The buttercup phacelia (*Phacelia ranunculacea*) is representative of the many special plant species known in the park. Over 175 bird species, including the bald eagle, have been observed in the park. Fox squirrels (*Sciurus niger niger*), a declining species in North Carolina, are found in upland areas of the park. The park is well within the fox squirrel's historical range but diminishing habitat has reduced the prime range in North Carolina to the public lands in the Sandhills.

Significant scenic resources are found at the Raven Rock bluffs and along the park's waterways. Raven Rock's unusual rock formations and wide river vistas have made it a landmark on the Cape Fear River for over a century. The Campbell Creek and Avents Creek areas are particularly scenic because the steep slopes that surround them are more reminiscent of mountain terrains than the Piedmont. Abundant displays of spring wildflowers, including mountain laurel and rhododendron, draw many visitors who come to enjoy the seasonal colors.

The extensive acreage at Raven Rock State Park is suitable for day-use activities such as hiking and picnicking as well as overnight camping. The Cape Fear River is an exceptional resource for water-based activities such as canoeing and fishing. Interpretation and education programs are the park's highest priority visitor program. The park's convenient location near the metropolitan areas of Raleigh, Durham and Fayetteville creates a large population base for the natural-resource oriented recreational opportunities.

The Cape Fear River is the focus of the park's significant archaeological resources. Prehistoric resources include Pre-Columbian artifacts such as projectile points, evidence that the river was once the site of Native American activities. Before the development of effective land transportation routes, the Cape Fear River played a major role in the growth and development of North Carolina. The Northington lock and dam site, which accommodated boat traffic through the fall zone rapids, and the Northington Ferry site, which once served as the main transportation link between Raleigh and Fayetteville, are both significant historical resources.

Raven Rock exists as a state park so that its valuable geological, biological, scenic, recreational and archaeological values can be protected. The Division of Parks and Recreation is charged with preserving these values and providing park experiences that promote pride in and understanding of North Carolina's natural heritage.

### **PRIMARY INTERPRETIVE THEMES**

**Geology of Raven Rock:** The geology of the Raven Rock area consists of metamorphic rocks of Precambrian through Pleistocene age, with recent age sediments occupying the floodplain along the Cape Fear River. The unique geological features of the Raven Rock area result from its being located in the fall zone. This term is used to designate the area separating the hard resistant rocks of the Piedmont from the sediments and softer rocks of the Coastal Plain. The fall zone is exemplified by a series of rapids in the river as well as numerous rock faces that have been sculptured and eroded by the action of the river.

**Natural History of the Cape Fear River:** The Cape Fear River is the dominant surface water feature within Raven Rock State Park. The headwaters originate in the central and eastern Piedmont with a drainage basin about 3,400 square miles upstream from the park. The river, flood plains, creeks and springs in the park create abundant biological and habitat diversity. The water quality of the Cape Fear River is vital to this ecosystem.

**Cultural History of the Cape Fear River:** Prior to development of the railroad system in the late 1800's, the Cape Fear River was the primary artery of transportation for people and goods between Wilmington and points inland. Both the Northington Ferry and a series of locks and dams were constructed on what is now park property.

### **STATISTICS**

Visitation (1998)	96,187
Operating Budget (FY 98-99)	\$ 248,549
Revenue (FY 98-99)	\$ 5,499

### **VISITOR FACILITIES**

Primitive camping (5 sites)	Primitive group camping (5 sites)
Canoe-in camping (6 sites)	Canoe-in group camping (5 sites)
7 Hiking trails (10.7 miles total)	Picnic area (30 tables) and concession area
2 Bridle trails (6.6 miles total)	River fishing

## CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION NEEDS

1	The <b>relocation/expansion of picnic area/ranger residences</b> project demolishes 2 old residences, constructs 3 new residences, a picnic area with 500 ft. access road, 75 car parking lot, 55 picnic sites with tables, grills and trash receptacles, 2000 ft. of paved walkway, handicapped accessible water fountain, 2 picnic shelters with 10 tables and 4 grills each, toilet building, septic tank and field and water and electric line extension.	\$ 1,356,834
2	The <b>visitor center</b> project (land dependent) will construct a standard visitor center with exhibit dioramas, provide office furniture and audio-visual equipment, park gate, 40 car parking lot, 5 car staff lot, signage and realign 1900 ft. of main park road.	2,488,363
3	The <b>family tent and trailer campground</b> project consists of demolitions in the picnic area, removal of a 3-acre parking lot, construction of a 2000 ft. main road with erosion control and seeding/mulching, construction of an 80-site campground, dumpstation, washhouse, water line, septic system, underground electric service and testing fees.	2,646,672
4	The <b>north side bridle trail</b> project will retread the 7 miles of trail and upgrade 5 stream crossings.	388,318
5	The <b>Fish Creek/Cedar Rock trail</b> project will construct 6 miles of new trail including 2 major pedestrian bridges.	503,250
6	The <b>lake and swim beach development</b> project (land dependent) constructs a 600 ft. dam, clears 21 acres for lake, constructs a 8500 ft. road, develops beach, creates 4200 ft. hiking trail, extends water and electric lines, builds bathhouse and provides site furniture, water fountains and landscaping.	5,058,969
7	The <b>rental cabin development</b> project (land dependent) constructs twenty-four 900 sq. ft. cabins, 3000 ft. paved access road, septic systems, extends electric and water lines and provides 24 furniture/equipment packages.	4,095,038
<b>TOTAL:</b>		<hr/> \$ 16,497,443

## DEDICATED NATURE PRESERVE

**Raven Rock State Park Dedicated Nature Preserve:** In April 1998, 1590 acres of Raven Rock State Park were approved by the Governor and Council of State for designation as a Dedicated Nature Preserve. This designation supercedes areas previously designated as Registered Natural Heritage Area and provides more stringent rules for use and protection.

The preserve includes the majority of the mature forests in the park generally found along the steeper slopes and in the floodplain of the river. Significant features contained in the preserve include: Raven Rock Bluff; Cedar Creek drainage; Avents Creek-Cape Fear River floodplain with its mature bottomland and levee forest and granitic flatrock community; the Basic Mesic Forest community of Isopyrum Point; Dry Oak-Hickory Forest community with its population of fox squirrels; the Granitic Flatrock community along Fish Creek; and one of the finest remaining examples of Piedmont/Mountain Levee Forest in the Cedar Rock area.

## FUTURE LAND ACQUISITION NEEDS

Completion of the Raven Rock State Park masterplan will require 1,918 acres. Acquisition priorities include protection of the scenic resources (primarily the views from Raven Rock), protection of the water resources, protection of high quality natural communities and the acquisition of land necessary for planned development.

Master Plan Total Acreage	5,467 acres
Current Park Acreage	<u>3,549 acres</u>
<b>Acquisition Needs</b>	<b>1,918 acres</b>

## 1999 STAFF POSITIONS

Permanent		Seasonal		Peak Load	
Park Superintendent II	1	Park Attendant	2	Park Attendant	1
Park Ranger II	1	General Utility Worker	2	Office Assistant II	1
Park Ranger I	1				
Maintenance Mechanic II	1				
Office Assistant III	1				

## PROPOSED STAFF ADDITIONS

Permanent	Seasonal	Peak Load